

Instructions: As you read, think about HOW archaeologists are reaching conclusions about life in the Stone Age. Specifically, think about:

- What did the archaeologists see in the caves?
- How did they study what they found to make their claims (best guesses)?

Stone Age Toddlers May Have Had Art Lessons

Stone age toddlers may have attended a form of prehistoric nursery where they were encouraged to develop their creative skills in cave art, say archaeologists. Research indicates young children expressed themselves in an ancient form of finger-painting.

Archaeologists at one of the most famous prehistoric caves in France have discovered that children were actively helped to express themselves through finger fluting – running fingers over soft red clay to produce decorative crisscrossing lines, zig-zags and swirls. In 2006, Leslie Van Gelder of Walden University unveiled a new technique for identifying the flutings' artists, developed after measuring and analyzing the hands of thousands of contemporary people. By measuring the width of the flutings made by the three middle fingers—index, middle and ring—it is possible to distinguish between individuals. The research in to finger measurement also proved that any flutings less than 34 millimeters [1.3 inches] wide were made by children under the age of 7. Van Gelder also found that the shapes of the top edges of the fingers allowed them to determine the gender of certain flutings' creators. Based on this system, they concluded that women and children were responsible for many of the flutings.

The drawings, including depictions of mammoths, form just a small proportion of the art found within the five-mile cave system. The majority of the drawings are flutings covering the walls and roofs. One chamber is so rich in flutings by children it is believed to be an area set aside for them. The marks of four children, estimated to be aged between two and seven, have been identified there.

"It suggests it was a special place for children. Adults were there, but the vast majority of artwork is by children," said Jess Cooney, a PhD student at the university's archaeology department. "It's speculation, but I think in this particular chamber children were encouraged to make more art than adults. It could have been a playroom where the children gathered or a room for practice. Or it could have been a room used for a ritual for particular children, perhaps an initiation of sorts."

The juxtaposition of the flutings of individuals indicates the relationships between the cave dwellers, the researchers say. For example, the markings show that one seven-year-old girl was most often in the company of the smallest of the adults, probably a male and possibly an older brother.

"Some of the children's flutings are high up on walls and on the ceilings, so they must have been held up to make them or have been sitting on someone's shoulders," said Cooney.

Flutings by the two-year-old suggest the child's hand was guided by an adult. Cooney said: "The flutings and fingers are very controlled, which is highly unusual for a child of that age, and suggests it was being taught. The research shows us that children were everywhere, even in the deepest,

darkest, caves, furthest from the entrance. They were so involved in the art you really begin to question how heavily they were involved in everyday life.

"The art shows us this is not an activity where children were running amok. It shows collaboration between children and adults, and adults encouraging children to make these marks. This was a communal activity. We don't know why people made them. We can make guesses like they were for initiation rituals, for training of some kind, or simply something to do on a rainy day," said Cooney.

Now that you have read the article, think about the claims, or best guesses, the authors made. What evidence did they use to make these claims? In the space provided, summarize the evidence or claim that matches up with the claim or evidence provided.

For example, for the claim "The flutings were made by children," think about HOW the scientists figured this out. What specific things did they find that made them think this?

<u>Claim</u>	→	<u>Evidence Supporting The Claim</u>
Flutings were made by children	→	_____ _____
Some areas were specifically for children	→	_____ _____
_____	←	Flutings were child sized but located on the ceiling.

Archeologists use knowledge of modern humans to assist in the interpretations of artifacts	→	_____